

# **Pols Fight New LI Designation**

## **Say federal decision could impact funds, call to nullify**

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Washington - Long Island members of Congress and New York's senators argued yesterday that a federal decision to change Long Island's statistical designation could mean the loss of big bucks and the Island's identity. But federal officials say not to worry, it's a distinction without a difference.

At issue is a rather arcane, but significant designation of certain geographical locations as "metropolitan statistical areas." Long Island has for many years comprised its own MSA, separate from New York City.

Now, the Bush administration's Office of Management and Budget has changed the statistical areas and put Nassau and Suffolk counties together with the city. Long Island now forms its own sub-category, however, called a "division," within the New York area, instead of an "area."

"They still have their own area," argued OMB spokesman Trent Duffy. "It's only a different name. The names have been changed but the status is still the same."

But that's confusing, argued Long Island representatives in calling for a reversal of the decision. They said that federal money is distributed according to a formula pegged to MSA designations and that other categories such as Money magazine's "The 10 Most Livable Cities," are also based on those designations.

"I think that it's two very sensitive areas," said Rep. Tim Bishop (D-Southampton), who attended a meeting with U.S. chief statistician Katherine Wallman, called by Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington).

"When you mess with civic pride it's a problem and when you mess with money it's a problem. This is the exacta; you get both," Bishop said.

Israel said there will be a public meeting at 1 p.m. tomorrow at the Alfonse M. D'Amato Courthouse in Central Islip to discuss the issue. Federal officials have been asked to attend.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), who also attended the meeting, called for OMB to at least issue a letter to all federal agencies saying that federal funding formulas would not be changed due to the new

designations. Wallman said she would look into it, according to those at the private meeting.

"We want it to clearly instruct the government that they are not to change funding formulas based on these new statistics," Clinton said, adding that the New Yorkers want the letter by tomorrow's meeting. "They [federal officials] tell us it was not their intention [to reduce funding] but I want it in writing," Clinton said.

Duffy said he did not know if it was possible to get the letter done at all or by tomorrow's meeting.

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) said he is trying "persuasion" on the OMB director designate, Josh Bolton, who has yet to be confirmed by the Senate, to see if he could get the decision reversed. Bolton's appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.

Israel said that while the letter idea had merit, "I'm not sure anything short of a reversal is going to be adequate."

Long Island was first named a separate MSA in 1972. Long Island officials and New York's representatives in Washington successfully fought an OMB decision in 1993 that would have taken away the region's separate status.

Suffolk planner Roy Fedelem, who attended the meeting in Washington with the OMB officials, said Long Island "doesn't fit into their program. We'd have to be an exception, but we were in 1972."

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